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Application No.: 09/550,583
In reply to Office Action dated November 8, 2006
Page 8 of 10

REMARKS

This is in response to the Office Action mailed on November 8, 2006. Claims 1, 3-8, 10-14, 22, and 24-28 are pending in the application and rejected. With this response, claims 1, 8, and 22 are amended. The remaining claims are unchanged, and no new claims are added.

Claims 1, 3, 6-8, 10, 13-14, 22, 24, and 27-28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hicks in view of Bissonette. In addition, dependent claims 4-5, 11-12, and 25-26 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hicks in view of Bissonette and further in view of Elance. Applicants have amended the claims to include features not shown in any proposed combination of the references, and also features not suggested in the prior art.

Neither Hicks nor Bissonette (and Elance) teach the features of the amended independent claims. For example, the prior art does not teach "a system database including a plurality of category databases, the category databases including at least a contracts database, an industry database, and a bench marking database, wherein each of the category data bases include a plurality of Contract Manufacturing Organization data structure" as set forth in the independent claims. Further, the prior art does not teach "identifying a particular Contract Manufacturing Organization data structure based on request data from a user wherein the request data includes a type of inquiry and is provided to the system database that utilizes one of the category databases to process the request data based on the type of inquiry in the request data" as set forth in the independent claims.

Instead, Hicks, which was used to cite the feature of the data structures, teaches only a single database, rather than "a plurality of category databases." Further, Hicks teaches a request data is only provided to this single database, rather than to "one of the category databases to process the request data based on the type of inquiry in the request data." Bissonette was not cited for these features, and it does not include them anyway. Thus, because neither of these references show the example amended features of the independent claims, these features must be lacking in any proposed combination of the references.

Application No.: 09/550,583
In reply to Office Action dated November 8, 2006
Page 9 of 10

Further, the prior art does not suggest a modification to provide these example features. Hicks simply includes a system where the specific inquiry is "Where can I get at least a selected amount of discount on a particular item I want to purchase in a selected geography?" There is no need to include category databases to process a particular type of inquiry. The prior art does not recognize the problems facing the Applicants. One of these problems concerns providing a system that addresses many areas of commerce regarding purchasing from suppliers or service providers. The present claims set forth an improvement over the prior art. Rather than simply assisting a consumer looking for a good deal on a product or service, the present claims set forth a system that "may be utilized to assist sales departments, operations departments, research and development departments, and procurement departments" as set forth in the specification on page 22, lines 28-30.

With this amendment, claims 1, 8, and 22 are amended. The remaining claims depend from one of the amended independent claims. By virtue of their dependency, these claims are patentable also. Accordingly, the claims are all distinguishable from the prior art. Applicants respectfully request removal of the rejections and favorable action and allowance of the application.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejections and favorable action and allowance of the application.

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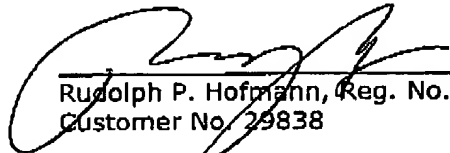
MAR 08 2007

Application No.: 09/550,583
In reply to Office Action dated November 8, 2006
Page 10 of 10

CONCLUSION

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims and ask that a Notice of Allowance be issued in this case. In the event a telephone conversation would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner may reach the undersigned at 612-607-7340. If any fees are due in connection with the filing of this paper, then the Commissioner is authorized to charge such fees including fees for any extension of time, to Deposit Account No. 50-1901 (Attorney Docket No. 060021-358401).

Respectfully submitted,



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